

*Description of a New Lizard discovered by Mr. Dyson in Venezuela.*

By J. E. GRAY, Esq., F.R.S., F.Z.S.

In the 'Annals and Magazine of Natural History' I described a lizard, from Columbia, which Mr. Brandt sent me under the name of *Argalia marmorata*, and considered it as the type of a peculiar family. In Mr. Dyson's collection, just received at the Museum, there is a second species of this genus from Venezuela, differing from the former not only in the colouring, but in the size of the head and the comparative length of the tail.

This genus has much the appearance of the *Barisia*, but is at once known from them and other New World *Zonuridæ* by having femoral pores, by the position of the nostrils, and by the scales on the side of the body not being granular, though rather smaller than those of the back.

## ARGALIA OLIVACEA.

Olive-green; beneath pale brown; sides of neck and body yellow spotted; tail rather longer than the body and head, thick at the base. Palms of the feet bright yellow.

Inhab. Venezuela.

Mr. Dyson found a pair of these lizards on a tree in the mountains, 8000 feet above the level of the sea, near the Colonia de Tova, by a tree called *Grand Cedro*, the largest known in Venezuela, and much larger than that described by Humboldt.

They now form part of the collection of the British Museum. The sexes are quite alike in form and colour.—*From the Proceedings of the Zoological Society*, June 22, 1847.

## SWARM OF LADYBIRDS (COCCINELLÆ).

As several accounts of a swarm of ladybirds have appeared in the daily papers and have excited some interest, I send you a few notes made on this somewhat extraordinary phænomenon during a stay of a few days on the Isle of Thanet. On Friday, August 8th, I was at Broadstairs. The wind was in the north-east; and a good deal of rain fell, after a drought in that district of six months' duration. On the Saturday it became fine, with a strong wind from the south-west. Early in the morning, a few ladybirds made their appearance. Their number kept increasing during the whole of Saturday, Sunday and Monday, when the esplanade and cliffs on the west side of the town were literally covered with them. They were evidently borne upon the wind, and were most numerous at the edges of the cliffs, as if they caught there as a last refuge before being carried out to sea again. The stalks of the dried plants were literally covered with these insects; and the stems of *Dipsacus*, *Centaurea* and other plants looked as if they were borne down by a crop of red berries. The white dresses of the ladies attracted them especially, and gave no little annoyance to those who were afraid of them. They are however perfectly harmless, and, excepting for their disagreeable smell, need not be avoided. These creatures are carnivorous, and, of course, could not find food in such immense quan-

tities ; and many of them I found were reduced to the sad extremity of feeding on their departed friends, whose dead bodies were strewed about the paths in all directions. They were preyed upon in great numbers by a black beetle. They were not all of one species. The common one, with a yellow body and seven black spots, was most abundant ; next to that came the species with two black spots ; the species with nine spots was scarcer still ; and I took only a few specimens of one with a black body and orange spots. The intensity of their colouring varied from a light yellow to a deep orange.

The ladybirds continued at Broadstairs till Thursday, August 12, when a strong wind from the south setting in cleared the whole district. They however found a resting-place at Margate, where I saw them in the same profusion in which they had appeared at Broadstairs. In a line from the Fort to the railway terminus they covered everything, and the air was filled with them. Up to this time, none, or not an unusual number of these creatures, had been seen at Ramsgate ; but on Saturday, the wind having got into the east on the previous evening, they began to appear there ; and on that evening they appeared to me to be as numerous at Ramsgate as at Broadstairs and Margate. On the 17th and 18th of August I observed a smaller swarm of these insects at Broadstairs, the wind blowing in a north-westerly direction.

From several accounts in the *Daily News* of the 16th and 17th of August, it appears that on Friday, August 13, the same insects were observed at Southend ; on the same day in great numbers in London ; and on the following Saturday and Sunday at Brighton.

Large flights of these creatures are not uncommon. Various swarms of them have been recorded as occurring at Brighton, where they have been supposed to have been carried from the neighbouring hop-grounds, as the larva of the ladybird feeds on the aphides which are so destructive of the hop-plant. On the present occasion, however, it appears that these insects must have been brought by the south-west wind from the continent. That the direction of the wind determined their appearance is evident from the fact that they disappeared at Broadstairs on the day they were seen at Margate, and were not found at Margate after their appearance at Ramsgate. The cause of the swarming of these insects is probably a scarcity of their natural food during the prevalence of a strong wind, which, sweeping over a large tract of the earth's surface, carries along with it all who are disposed to go. That this is the case seems confirmed by the fact that at first these insects only appeared by degrees ;—a few arriving and the number gradually increasing on a particular spot. One of the correspondents of the *Daily News* states that they came over in the form of a cloud in the direction of Calais and Ostend ; but although I was on the spot at the time, I neither saw nor heard anything of this cloud. I may add, as a fact for your Folk-Lore, that in the Isle of Thanet some of the common people regarded this visitation as foreboding the death of a great personage. Such a flight occurred just before the death of George the Third.—*Athenæum* for Aug. 28, p. 912.